

REMARKS

Independent Claims 3 and 23 are presented for consideration.

Independent Claims 3 and 23 have been amended to further distinguish Applicant's invention from the cited art. Claim 24 has been cancelled.

Initially, the Examiner is respectfully requested to acknowledge Applicant's claim for priority and receipt of the certified copy of the priority document, which was filed on June 1, 2004.

Claims 3 and 23 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Willis, Jr. '898. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 3 of Applicant's invention relates to a manipulator comprised of first and second contact portions opposing each other and facing a manipulation target object, first openings at the first contact portion, and second openings at the second contact portion. As amended, claim 3 sets forth fluid control means for performing an operation of feeding the manipulation target object by ejecting a first fluid at a first flow velocity from at least one of the first and second openings at a front side of the manipulation target object in a feeding direction and ejecting a second fluid at a second flow velocity slower than the first flow velocity from at least one of the first and second openings at a rear of side of the manipulation target object in the feeding direction.

Support for the claim amendments can be found, for example, on page 22, lines 20-26, of the specification.

In claim 23, a manipulator comprises first and second contact portions opposing each

other and facing a manipulation target object, first openings at the first contact portion, and second openings at the second contact portion. In addition, fluid control means controls an attitude of the manipulation target object by ejecting a fluid from at least one of the first openings and drawing a fluid from at least one of the second openings at a right side of a center of gravity of the manipulation target object, and ejecting a fluid from at least one of the second openings and drawing a fluid from at least one of the first openings at a left side of the center of gravity of the manipulation target object so as to generate a couple force around the center of gravity of the manipulation target object.

Support for the amendments to claim 23 can be found, for example, on page 21, line 27, through page 22, line 2, of the specification.

The patent to Willis, Jr. relates to a fluid current conveyor formed in a three-sided box-like structure of boxes 22, 24 and 26. Box 22 includes holes 14, and boxes 24 and 26 are provided with holes 20 pointed in the general direction of travel of an article along the conveyor. Air is supplied to the holes in the conveyor by pipes 38, 46 and 48.

In contrast to claim 3 of Applicant's invention, however, Willis, Jr. does not teach or suggest, among other features, ejecting a first fluid at a first flow velocity at a front side of an object and ejecting a second fluid at a second flow velocity slower than the first flow velocity at a rear side of the object. Valves 40 and 44 in Willis, Jr. are capable of adjusting air flow, but do not regulate fluid flow in the manner set forth in claim 3 of Applicant's present invention.

With respect to claim 23, Willis, Jr. is not read to teach or suggest, among other features, ejecting a fluid from at least one of the first openings and drawing a fluid from at least

one of the second openings at a right side of a center of gravity of an object, and ejecting a fluid from at least one of the second openings and drawing a fluid from at least one of the first openings at a left side of the center of gravity of the manipulation target object. Valves 40 and 41 in Willis, Jr. are incapable of regulating air flow in this manner.

Accordingly, it is submitted that Willis, Jr. fails to teach or suggest Applicant's invention as set forth in independent claims 3 and 23. Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) is respectfully requested.

Claim 24 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Kuwaki et al. '706. Without conceding to the propriety of this rejection, claim 24 has been canceled. This rejection is therefore deemed moot and should be withdrawn.

Accordingly, it is submitted that Applicant's invention as set forth in independent Claims 3 and 23 is patentable over the cited art.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of this application is deemed to be in order and such action is respectfully requested.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

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